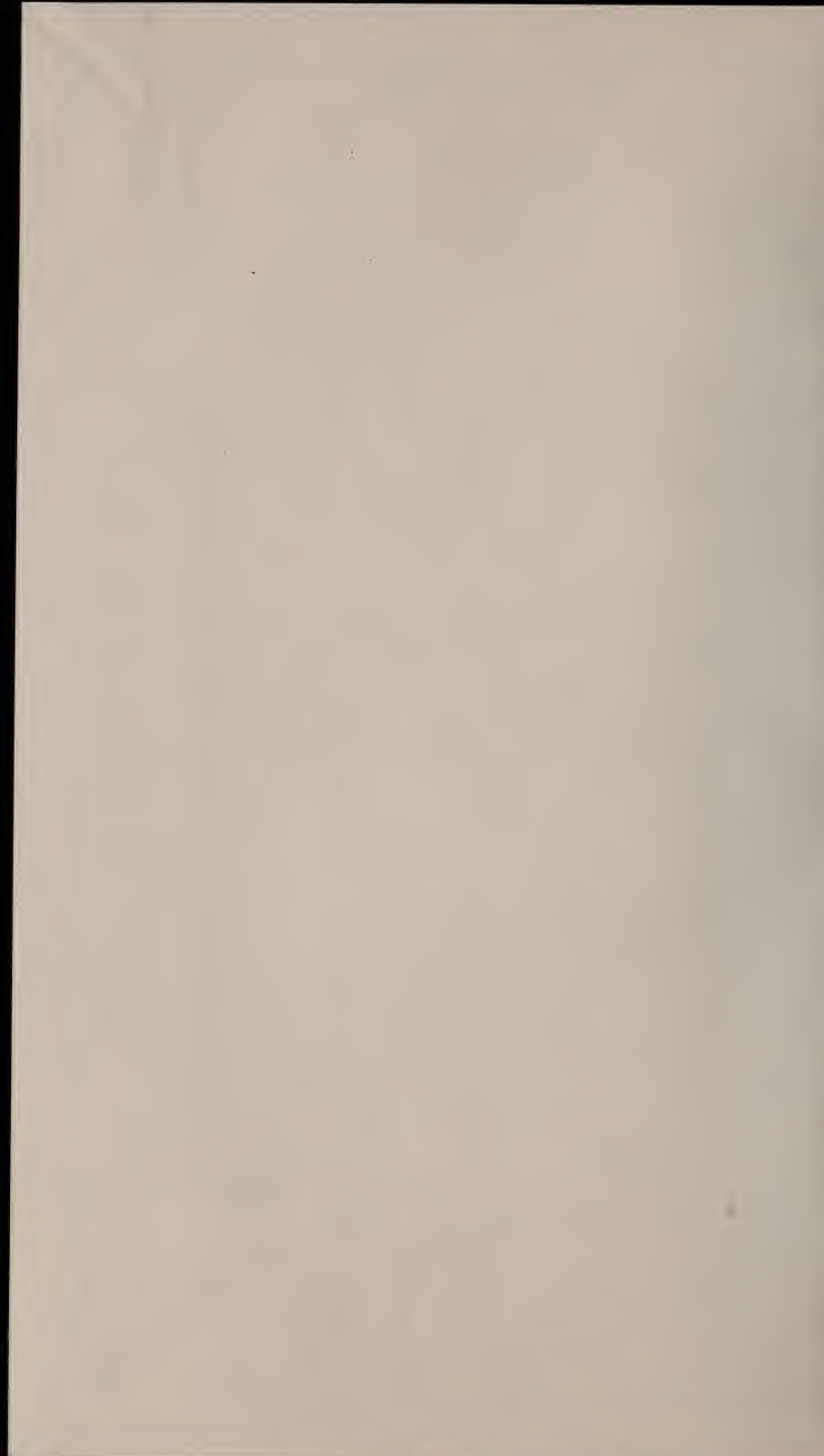


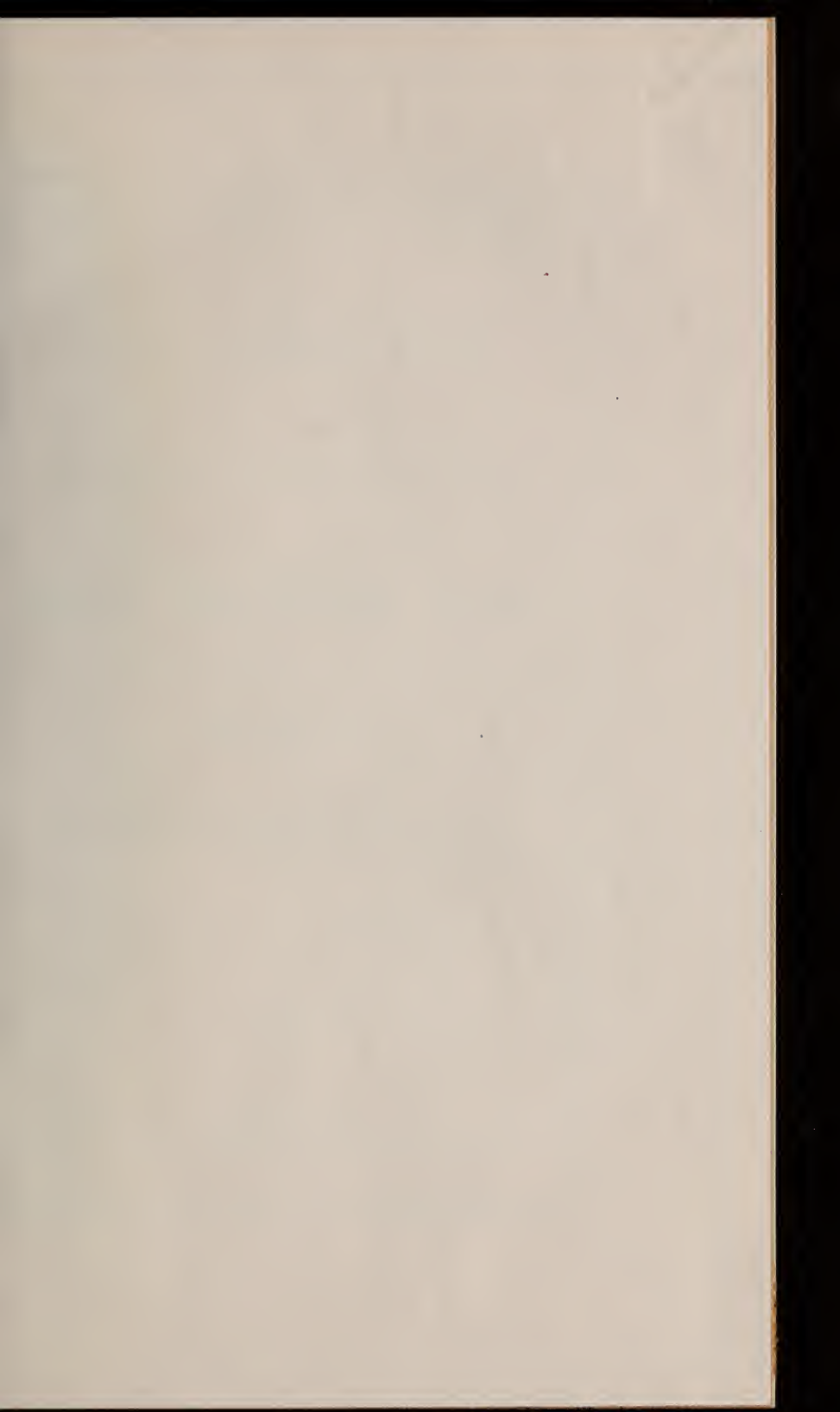
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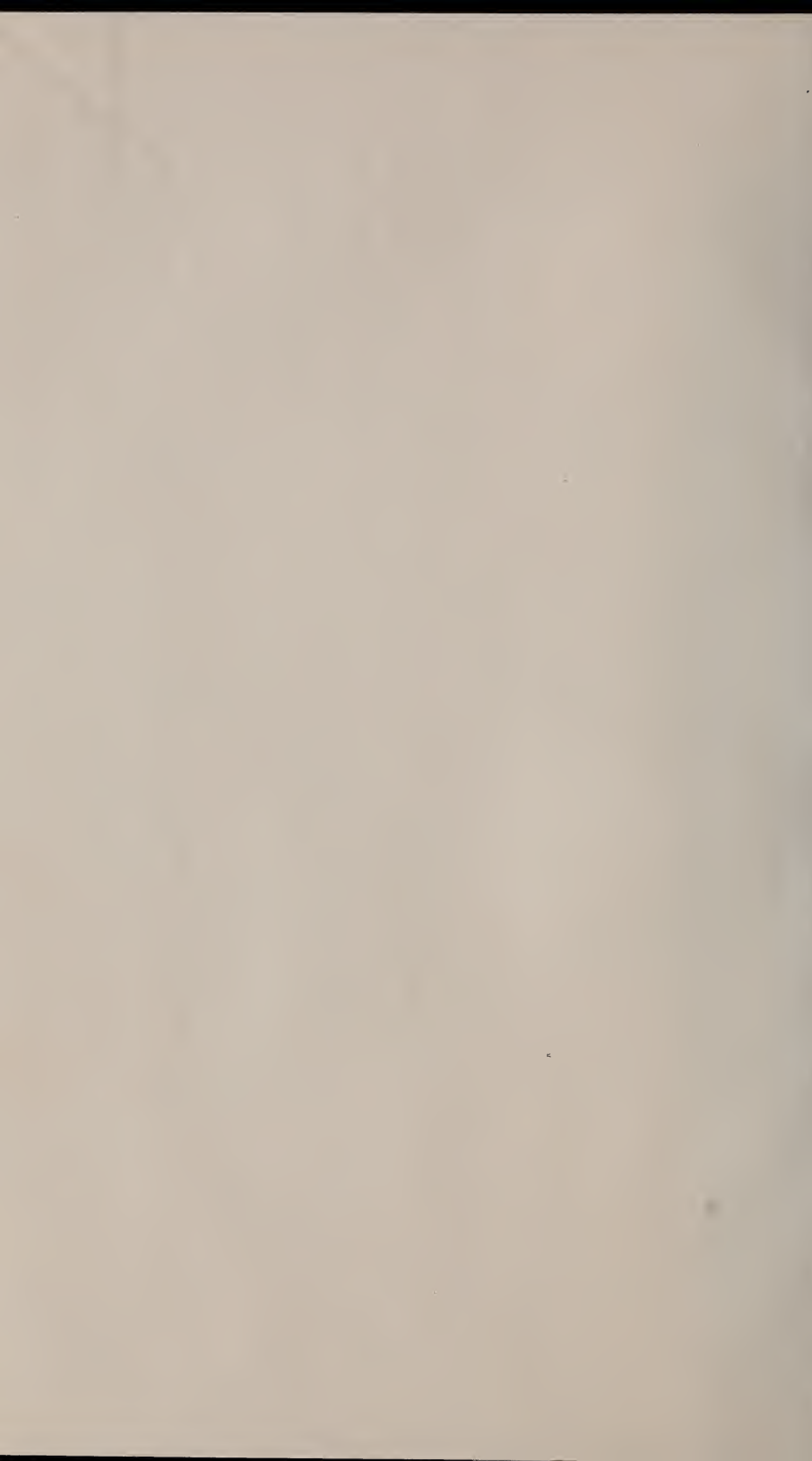
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The Duty of the Christian Scholar to the Masses.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE HOUSE OF CONVOCATION OF

Hobart Free College, Geneva,

JULY 19, 1854.

✓
BY THE REV. WILLIAM A. MATSON, M. A.

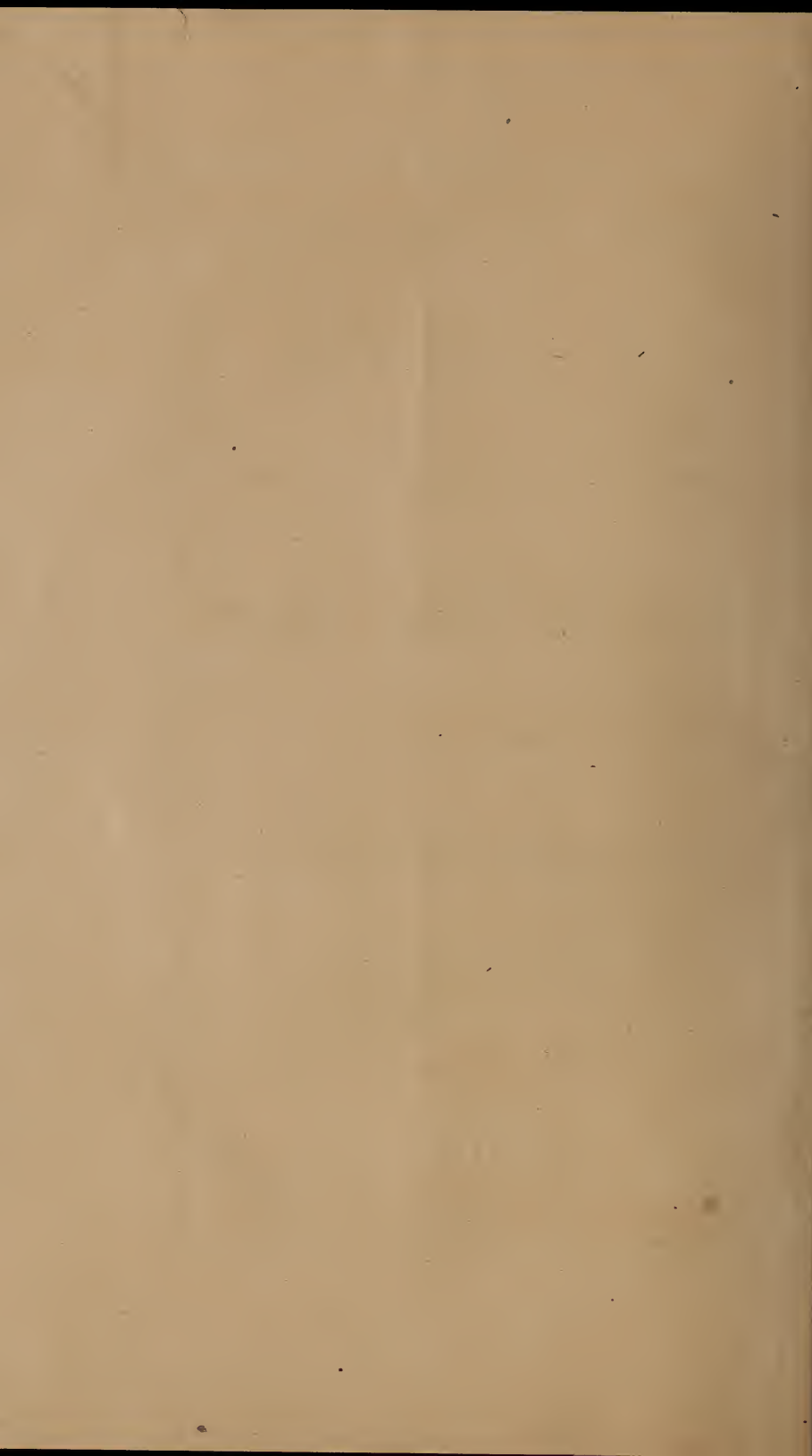
Published by request of the House.

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D. C. GROVE, PRINTER, NO. 113 GENESEE STREET.

1854.



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ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF CONVOCATION :

When, in years gone by, in college halls, we labored to fit ourselves for the active duties of life, the aim of our instructors was not merely to store the mind with information, but to discipline the intellect, to teach it how to work, how to grapple with the realities we were to encounter in the world. And when we entered upon our various spheres of labor as citizens, we found ourselves in duty bound and by necessity compelled to take a practical view of whatever subject with which we came in contact. Even among those who have chosen the professions, where we must still linger among books, and where the mind must still investigate principles, and study as while under-graduates we learned to do, he alone has been useful who has been able to turn to account the knowledge thus acquired, and send forth his thoughts upon an active mission for the benefit of the world. Let this justify one unexpectedly called to address you, for choosing a practical subject and treating it in a practical manner.

On these shores the experiment of a Republic has been tried, and thus far it may be said to have succeeded. There are portions of the world, however, where such an experiment has failed. If we ask for a reason, it is at hand :

some men are capable of self-government and some are not. An ignorant people cannot make wise, a vicious people will not make just laws. A capacity for self-government, then, implies that at least the majority of the citizens are intelligent and virtuous. To desire for a rude, unlettered and demoralized population, a republic or a democracy, were to crave for them anything but true liberty. The wisdom and virtue of the founders of our Republic, placed it on its firm basis. The liberal and enlightened policy they bequeathed to their descendants, has saved us from even the attempts of despotism. And the problem of the perpetuity of our institutions is to be solved, not by inquiring, is a republic more stable than a monarchy, but, are means provided and carried into execution, of rendering our citizens capable of self-government? We may suppose some true-hearted friend of his country to sit down to examine this question; and, summing up the number of institutions of learning and places for religious instruction, the number of instructors in both departments, to enjoy the satisfaction of having ascertained that in these things the supply is fully equal to the demand. But what is true to-day may not be true a year hence. Our population increases at the rate of over 600,000 per annum. The means, then, for diffusing learning and virtue, adequate to the wants of one year, fall far short of the demand the next. The increase of voters, by adoption and by native born citizens arriving to maturity, is wonderfully rapid. These make our laws and fill our public offices. And if the safety of the republic depends upon the virtue and intelligence of the law-making and the law-executing power, are the means for qualifying these citizens for their position commensurate with the rapid in-

crease in numbers of those who need such preparation? Such questions it becomes us to look in the face and answer, for sooner or later they will demand a response.

I know the reply of individualism is the answer of Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" It is the reply which a devotion to dollars and cents may prompt. But it is not that which becomes scholars, and patriots, and Christians. When we seek to elevate the masses, our labor is of little profit, unless they in turn extend the boon when we are gone, and in regions beyond the sphere of our influence. And we ill requite the sacrifices and labors of those who gave us our literary and religious advantages, if we use them but for our individual benefit.

The questions, then, what is to be done and how? address themselves to us as Alumni, who, thankful for what our Alma Mater has done for us, now revisit her halls to assure her of our interest and co-operation in the work she is doing for others.

We might, and not in the spirit of the alarmist, but in that of the patriot, attempt to sketch the actual state of our country as it regards the intelligence and morality of its citizens; we might point with pride to our facilities for imparting a knowledge of the common and most useful branches of learning to almost every inhabitant; the many institutions where not only higher acquirements may be secured, but mind may be disciplined; the zeal of our various religious bodies; the sterling integrity often witnessed, and the prevalence of which gives confidence to the hope that our country as yet, and for a long period to come, is secure. But on the other hand, it were not candid to overlook the yearly increasing bitterness of party and sectional

strife, the crime in high places, the want of principle among legislators, the symptoms of insubordination and riot in many quarters, the lawless and piratical expeditions which government seems too weak to restrain. And when we find the cause of these things to lie mainly in that excess of individualism, that "every man for himself" principle, which tends to anarchy,—in want of reverence, not only for what is sacred, but for that which on every principle of order and good breeding is entitled to respect,—in the insubordination of youth,—the readiness to lend a favorable ear to every new experiment in government or morals, whether their authors are qualified to propound such theories and experiments or not, and even if the trial would involve the overthrow of what is known to be sound and efficient, and the adoption of what is not known to be either wise or expedient;—the simple fact that these things are so, suggests the more than probability that our country may be in danger, and enforces the conviction that this is no time for those who love their country to whisper peace, and do nothing to avert the impending calamity.

What is to be done? is readily answered. In a country where the people rule, means must be provided for qualifying them to become rulers. But who are the people? Take those now on the stage of life, at the ballot box, in the market place, and in the fields, acting the part of citizens. On them an influence may be brought to bear. We may, to some extent, reclaim the vicious, refine the rude, instil a love of country, a love of home, a love of virtue, and a love of God. But they are passing away, and the culture bestowed upon them alone will end in a light harvest, while the future crop may be choked through neglect.

And if we labor for those who are citizens now, there are those among them whose pride will render them inaccessible to our efforts; some too bigoted to be instructed; and some too old to learn. Then while we do what we can for the present, our proper sphere of labor is with the rising generation. If you can discipline their minds, impart to them virtuous principles and the fear of God, you have at once trained up good citizens, capable of becoming wise law-makers, honest and able statesmen, all that our country requires.

There are hopeful signs in the fact that our people are awakening to the necessity of providing for the poor an education. If the rich alone were to rule, if they alone were to be our voters, our office holders, and our law-makers, then, with some plausibility, but not with safety, might the nation neglect its poor. But we give them equal rights, yes, and even those whom we have not taught the bare rudiments of a common education, we invite to the polls, to cast their votes for men to carry out measures, the wisdom of which is yet a problem unsolved by the profoundest statesmen in the land. However it may sound in a political harangue to cry, "*Vox populi vox Dei*," is it not an absurdity which none can fail to perceive, to ask the man who cannot read, who cannot put together premises and draw a conclusion upon any subject beyond the routine of his daily toil, whose judgment you would not ask, whose opinion you would not take upon any matter where sound sense is required—to ask such a one, by casting his vote, to give his opinion upon the profoundest questions of political economy? We are not here to discuss the suffrage question, but this we would do, and this must be done, if we would se-

cure permanency for our institutions—educate, intellectually and morally, our citizens; give them, in youth, such instruction and discipline as shall qualify them for giving an intelligent and an honest opinion when the country shall require it.

The poor, the ignorant, the lower classes! other than demagogues have need of their aid. Other than political aspirants may speak of them and for them. Trodden down by wealth and power, and condemned by pride though they may be, we measure our words when we say it, they are the most important class in any country. Ancient nations of renown have left monuments to tell us how great they were, and their relics disclose the fact that with their fall the world went backward, and lost attainments in art and science which this age of progress and invention and boasted intelligence has not equalled. But why did they fall? why were their treasures of learning and skill buried with them? They neglected the poor—the lower classes; and when barbarous hordes came down with sword and faggot, the rich and the noble, the sole possessors of learning and refinement and skill, were swept away, while the poor, who escaped the desolation, were scattered among other nations, not to carry with them art and knowledge, but only to tell of the greatness of the people whom they had served as slaves. The divine Author and Finisher of our faith found his first disciples among the poor; and though he came as a Saviour of all, and his mission was to the people of all classes, yet for centuries, among the lowest orders was found the great body of Christians. This, too, in an age when the masses were kept low, and not as with us, granted a power and an influence. But that holy faith,

whose seed was first planted among the common people, whose first teachers and martyrs were among the lowly and despised, has now spread to every quarter of the world, and yet shall penetrate every heart and every home.

And if in nations, where the masses were denied political rights, and kept poor and ignorant and debased, they were in fact the important class, what may be their position in a country like ours, where as citizens they stand on a level with the most refined, the most wealthy, and the most learned? Those whom we call the lower classes—what are they? what our fathers were; and we are what their children shall be. Yes, let us trace our ancestry; and how many generations back shall it be before we find them in the hovel of poverty, the tillers of the soil, the common day laborers, ignorant, uncultivated, rude, perhaps vicious, but undoubtedly despised? Trace the ancestry of the greatest statesmen of our country, whom living we honor, and whom dead the nation mourns. The sires of the giant intellect and noble worth were nursed in the lap of ignorance and poverty. Nay, go now if you will to the cheerless garret of the city, to the lone hovel on the moor, among the diggers of our canals and the builders of our railroads, the people of rude speech and coarse manners, and behold there the sires of our country's future statesmen and heroes, her future Clays, and Websters, and Washingtons. For this is the peculiar feature of our country. Industry and honesty must and will secure a competence, a competence will secure the means of education, and among the educated, success is not to the rich, not to the poor, not to the high or low born, but to the persevering. But if men will assert that the history of the past

affords no ground of conjecture for the future, if a supercilious pride will sneer with incredulity when we assert that the men yet to be born, whom the nation will honor and whose favor the descendants of the proudest among us shall court, will trace their parentage back to the ignorant, the beggar, the pauper, the laborer of our day, then let them at least grant this, which no sophistry can disprove, that the children of the now humbler classes shall one day hold in their hands the balance of political power. On them must depend the destiny and the welfare of the nation. With them must rest the decision of the question, whether ours is to be a free and intelligent, or an enslaved—a Christian or an infidel nation. That will be no question if we but permit them to grow up in ignorance and vice; that will be no question if Christians suffer them to grow up Godless.

Let us not be misunderstood. Let it not be thought that we would overlook the children of the rich, or transfer to them the neglect shown to the poor. But here is another peculiarity of our country. The poor may rise, but the rich may fall. Let the poor be industrious and virtuous, and there is no power here to keep them down. Let the rich be idle and vicious, and there is no power here to hold them up. Let the rich be wise and virtuous, and it shall add to the power which wealth confers. Let the poor be idle, and the privilege of citizenship will not save them from destruction. Of the poor we may calculate with moral certainty, that if not this, the next—or if not that, the following generation, will move in a higher sphere than that of their fathers. But what is to be the position of the descendants of those commonly called the higher classes?

The answer is to be found in the history of wealth in our country. One man by plodding industry accumulates a fortune ; neither miserly nor prodigal himself, he trains his family to the proper use of wealth. An education is secured for the children, the taste is cultivated, the home is adorned with modest beauty, not with gaudy display. At the close of life he finds himself surrounded with comforts, perhaps even with tasteful elegancies, his children engaged in active life, not squandering the fortune his toil acquired, but using in a proper and Christian manner the advantages his money was able to procure. Such a family will not sink to poverty. And while such principles obtain, its descendants will continue to be useful to the Church and the country.

But another man acquires his wealth with toil and miserly frugality. His family are denied the comforts and almost the necessities of life ; his poor children find in their home no nursery of refinement, and elegance, and taste. Knowledge costs too much, and they are ignorant of all but the common branches ; they are employed to help the father earn, and the father's instructions are confined to teaching the family how to save. The man dies and leaves a fortune to be disposed of. And it is disposed of. Some, indeed, may inherit the parent's parsimony, and go on in the parent's path. But some—and this is most likely—who have been kept from every reasonable indulgence—like Tantalus, within the reach of that they were not permitted to touch—ere yet the old man's corpse is cold in the ground, pounce like vultures upon the hoarded store, and speedily consume it. If they come not to poverty, their children quickly do ; and must begin again from the standpoint of their grandfather.

Another man begins miserly, but the love of display is his weakness. He has too much worldly wisdom, however, to spend before he has amassed. But when means permit, he builds in style, teaches his family to live in style, gives his children a stylish education, the alphabet of which is to forget that their father once was poor, and remember that they are in a sphere above the poorer classes. He becomes perhaps a successful speculator, and wealth pours in in more abundant streams. He must, as he says, provide for his family; and this means the giving them every luxury, the saving them from the necessity of labor. He dies and bequeaths to his children a princely fortune, and the art of spending it in a princely manner, but not the art of replenishing it as it goes. With the next generation that fortune vanishes, and the uphill work from poverty to wealth must be begun again.

These examples are the history of wealth in our country; and hence we repeat, that while we may calculate with moral certainty that the descendants of the present poor will one day be rich, the descendants of the majority of those now wealthy will become poor.

But then, it may be said, on the other hand, that if this be so, what we do for the masses now will be but temporary in its effects; they or their children will become rich, but their descendants will become poor; and what we do now, future generations must do again. It is true that the work now begun must be continued by those who follow us; and yet, it is not true that effectual efforts for the masses will be temporary only. For it is not true that they who amass riches must necessarily misuse them. Why is it that the man who acquires wealth hoards it or squanders it? It is

because his mind has never been enlarged by a liberal education. Take the youth at an age when he should be in college halls amid the studies of a refined literature—place him in a station where all he is taught is, how to save, how to bargain, how to entice customers; and when his own earnings shall release him from the necessity of toil, or warrant him in expending, how shall he use his wealth? Shall he surround himself with works of art? But he has no taste. A part of his education was to deny himself the enjoyment of these. Shall he spend his leisure hours in a well stored library? But the love of books was banished from his youthful mind. Shall he found and endow literary institutions? He has never learned the nature of these. Or hospitals, or asylums for the unfortunate? But the habits he has acquired have taught him never to expend without a substantial return; and charity occupies so obscure a department in the education of trade, that late in life it will be found a difficult lesson to learn, that “it is blessed to give.”

What more can you expect of such a man, than that he should give his children expensive habits and withhold from them the art of acquiring wealth? His aim from childhood has been, to attain a position where he may enjoy and not work, expend and not be compelled to accumulate. And he fancies that he is showering blessings upon the heads of his children, when he is giving them in youth what he was compelled to wait for until old age. But he will give his children an education! O, yes! But it is because that elevates them in society; and it is not knowledge, not discipline, but elevation in society, that he seeks for them. And so his daughters may have a fashionable education:

we all know what that is. His sons may, yes, must graduate at a college; but the diploma is the object sought, and an institution where the diploma may be obtained without much mental exertion, will answer the father's purpose just as well as one where they must study—and the children's purpose much better.

But if you can take the poor youth, discipline and enlarge his mind by study, cultivate his judgment and his tastes, store him with useful information, and give him pious habits, then send him forth upon the world: could you do this with every poor youth in the land, what a scene would our country present to the world! And, in respect to wealth, when cultivated men have acquired it, then may we look to find our country the home of scholars, of patrons, of literature, the nursery of art, and the dwelling of godliness. Then wealthy parents will be at no loss how to employ wealth to the best advantage of children. They will know what education to give, for they will know what education means, and what its value is.

If, then, the children of the masses are to become our voters merely, we owe it to our country so to educate them that they may learn to exercise that prerogative intelligently and honestly. If they are to become our legislators and our statesmen, what can compensate for the neglect of them now? Or if you view them as future parents and citizens, the future possessors of wealth, on whose taste the cultivation of our country's literature and art—on whose piety the character of our country's religion shall depend—the appeal in behalf of the youth of the masses touches the very heart of every christian scholar and patriot.

But there is one point bearing upon our duty to the common people, upon which we shall barely have time to touch. There are, and perhaps ever will be, among us, men of talent, men of shrewdness, men of ambition, but without principle; men who seek stations of political power. But their success depends upon their favor with the masses. They must court them; and accordingly, they watch the popular breeze before they spread their sails. But you make the masses educated and virtuous, you force the unprincipled politician into wise and virtuous measures. He will find that votes are not to be purchased by flattery or by gold; but if he will seek the favor of our intelligent and honest people, he must lay aside his arts and act from principle; or, if he will be the mere demagogue still, he will find his success to depend upon adherence to his country's welfare, and in her interest will he seek and find his own.

Gentlemen of the House of Convocation—since most of us left these halls, and were sent out upon the world to take part in the active duties of life, our Alma Mater has assumed a new position. She stands now before our country as the first, and as yet the only free college. Her doors are thrown open, and she invites now the youth of the masses to enter, and on a perfect equality with the sons of the opulent and refined, to practice the athletics which shall fit them for the contest of life. If our country's future welfare depends upon the care and culture bestowed upon those who, now in an obscure, shall one day hold a more prominent position as citizens, then to her claims upon us as Alumni, our Alma Mater has further claims as patriots. If

the hallowed memories of the past, if gratitude for what she has bestowed upon us, have made her dear, then to these is added the consideration that she is now doing a work, a noble work for our country, which none other has undertaken. Here the youth of the masses may be prepared for acting the part of citizens : not now as in former days, need they be sent forth to accumulate wealth before they have learned how wealth may best be used : but here mind may be disciplined, sound scholarship may be attained, taste may be cultivated, character formed and moulded under a refined and virtuous influence, fitting youth to act the part of citizens, not as voters merely, but as the heads of homes and households, the centres of influence, as politicians, as statesmen, as law makers and rulers, as guides and instructors of youth, and in the capacity of Christian ministers, as guides and instructors of old and young. These are positions which must be filled, and here the poor are invited to send their sons to be qualified to fill them ?

The nation has need of soldiers ; it knows that none are competent for high stations in the army and navy save those who, by long and thorough training, are qualified for them. But the nation has far greater need of citizens and statesmen. Mental discipline and moral training are the indispensable qualifications for these. It is not charity for government to educate without cost those who are to direct her fleets and armies ; and it is not mere charity for Christian patriots and scholars to educate without cost, those who are to wield the destinies of the nation. The rich are not excluded here because the poor are invited to enter ; and where is the mere charity institution which expends labor free of cost upon the rich ?

Rather let us recognize in this institution, the practical carrying out of republican principle,—placing rich and poor upon the same level, giving them equal advantages, and knowing no distinction but that of merit. And if some, tenacious of their position as members of families who can trace their ancestry back for three or four generations, or some, strutting in the pride of newly acquired wealth, fear that their sons should be soiled, or lose some of their refinement by contact with those who were reared in homes of rude and simple frugality—if such be their objection to an institution that is free, let them know that they must seek a college education for their sons in some place not on this continent. In every college in the land are to be found sons of the poor. Charity has placed them there, or their own unconquerable industry, earning a support in leisure hours, has placed them there. And what is the effect of this contact of the rich with the poor, the refined with the rude, in that miniature world, the halls of a college? What was our experience, gentlemen, as under-graduates of this institution? We have seen, when this was not a free college, in the same class, wealth and refinement in noble strife with poverty and rudeness; and industry and merit alone decided the contest. We have seen them on a level in societies and in hours of recreation, and we have all marked the true gentleman, whether he were rich or poor. We have seen the glittering fop humbled by the side of one of nature's gentlemen, the son of an honest artizan. We have seen the truly noble spirit, the son of wealth, imparting a polish to his humbler classmate, and himself losing none of his refinement. And when the four years' course was run, and the diploma was bestowed—in this college not

given unless earned—we have seen them leave these halls, the son of the opulent not less dignified and graceful, the son of humbler parentage not so rude as when he entered. True refinement of character does not tarnish by contact, while the real gem with roughened surface parts with what is worthless only, and comes forth resplendent in its own brilliancy.

But there is one feature more which I must notice ere we separate. When you have disciplined and stored with knowledge the mind of the youth, softened his manners and refined his taste, is he then qualified for filling any and every position to which as a citizen he may be called? There are, alas! even now such men, but totally destitute of moral principle. Are they fit for any station in life? Then for the youth of the masses there must be a moral discipline and nurture. But where shall we find the basis of a sound morality, but in the precepts of Christian piety? But methinks I hear at once the cry of sectarianism. Would that any outcry could cure the evil. But the deed is done. Christians are divided, and we must take things as they are, since they cannot be as we would have them. The faculty of a college must work as a unit if they would work efficiently. To exert a religious influence the work of religious instruction must be undertaken by some one of the religious bodies of Christendom. The whole matter is very simple. Commit this work to a faculty who are divided in sentiment, and a portion of religious instruction must be omitted. There are conflicting schools in philosophy. But for that reason must philosophy be erased from the list of studies? And because Christians differ, shall the youth of Christian parents be sent out into the world to act the part of citizens

of a Christian nation utterly destitute of a Christian education? But if this must be imparted, the work is well done only where there is unity of sentiment among the instructors. They who claim that these differences are all unimportant, can surely have no fault to find that here one set of views obtain in preference to some other. But however this may be, to send out upon the country an army of young men endowed with the power which knowledge and mental discipline give, without hearts that have been taught to reverence what is sacred, to hallow the name of God, to cherish a love of man founded upon a love of God, without a character moulded under the softening, humanizing, ennobling influence of the Christian religion, is to confer no benefit upon our country. It is placing power in hands unfit to wield it. Ignore the fact as men will, those wild schemes of social polity which have deluged a nation with blood, those mad plans of reform which, upon mere experiment, would overthrow all systems which age has made venerable and experience has proved stable, these had not their origin in Christian hearts and minds. That refinement which ministers to luxury and sensuality was never taught in a Christian institution. That vile ambition exhibited in the man of talent, who suffers himself to be used as the leader of a lawless mob of freebooters, was never nourished in halls where a Christian education was instilled. And if some honest alarmist, contemplating the scenes of riot, and dissipation, and crime, alas, too frequent among us, points to these black spots in our national character, as presages of a certain ruin, we can tell him that that dread calamity may be averted when Christian scholars shall pledge their hearts and hands to the task of imparting to the children

of the masses a sound, a thorough, a Christian education. Yes, and we can pledge security for all time to come, when to the now desert wastes of our frontiers we send colonists, not less hardy and enterprising, but more enlightened and more virtuous than those who now astound us with their deeds of daring, while they shock us with their lawlessness and their crimes.

Gentlemen, we live in an age of many projects and many reformers. There is a vast amount of wild scheming and idle theorising: the aim of all which is, to cure certain ills and obtain a fancied good. We must not, however, shut our eyes to the fact, that while there is no tenet so absurd as not to obtain disciples, so there is no theory which gains currency, but there is in it some element of truth. The very fact that there is a call for reform shows that reform is needed; and, though the evils denounced may be magnified, and the remedy proposed may be worse than the disease, yet it is folly to shut our eyes to the existence of real evils, or deny the necessity of reform. But if we would destroy evil we must first destroy its cause. And whatever of wrong may afflict society, can you not trace it all to narrow views and vicious principles,—the want of knowledge and the want of virtue? So that among all the reformers of the present age, they who direct their efforts to the overthrow of some particular enormity, or they who expend their labor to vindicate the rights of some particular class, these are not the men who are to renovate society. Their sphere of labor is too narrow; their remedies are partial; they leave the root of bitterness untouched; leave it in some new quarter to throw out new shoots the moment the old are destroyed. No, there is a principle old as creation,

given by the Creator himself, and never yet abrogated. It is, that if you would have good men and wise men, you must make them such in youth. Here is the very root of the matter. Here is where reform is to begin. Our country's future welfare must depend upon the character of its future citizens, those who are now our youth; and you may rest assured that they and they only are true reformers, who begin the work here,—taking the children of the rich and the children of the poor, giving them the knowledge which citizens require, and the principles which freemen need to guide them.

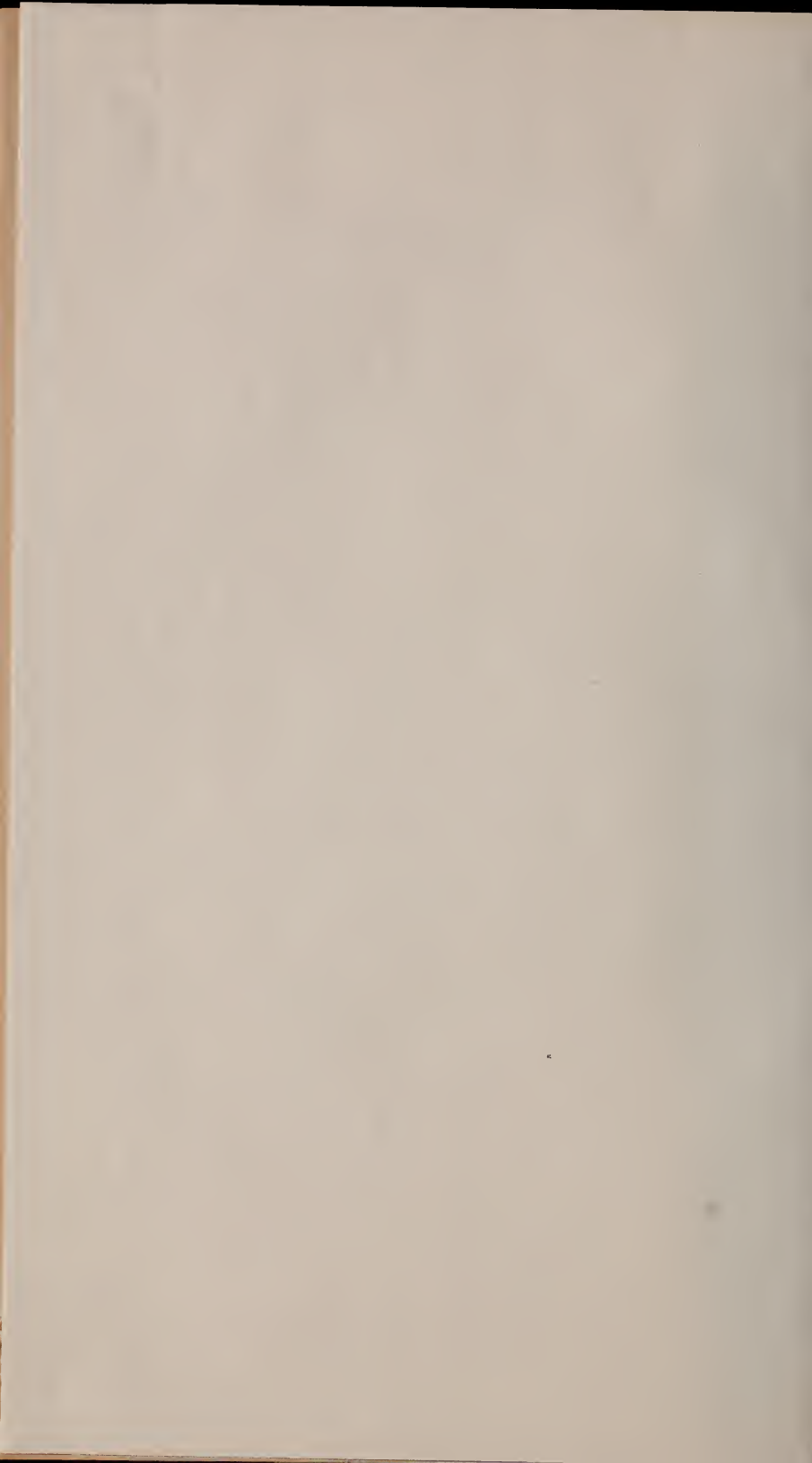
Gentlemen, to this noble work of elevating the youth of our country, poor as well as rich, our Alma Mater now stands pledged before the world; and as her children, grateful for the past, as men who love their country, to whom its honor is sacred and its welfare is dear, let us come nobly forward to her aid, ready, in her behalf, for sacrifice and for toil.

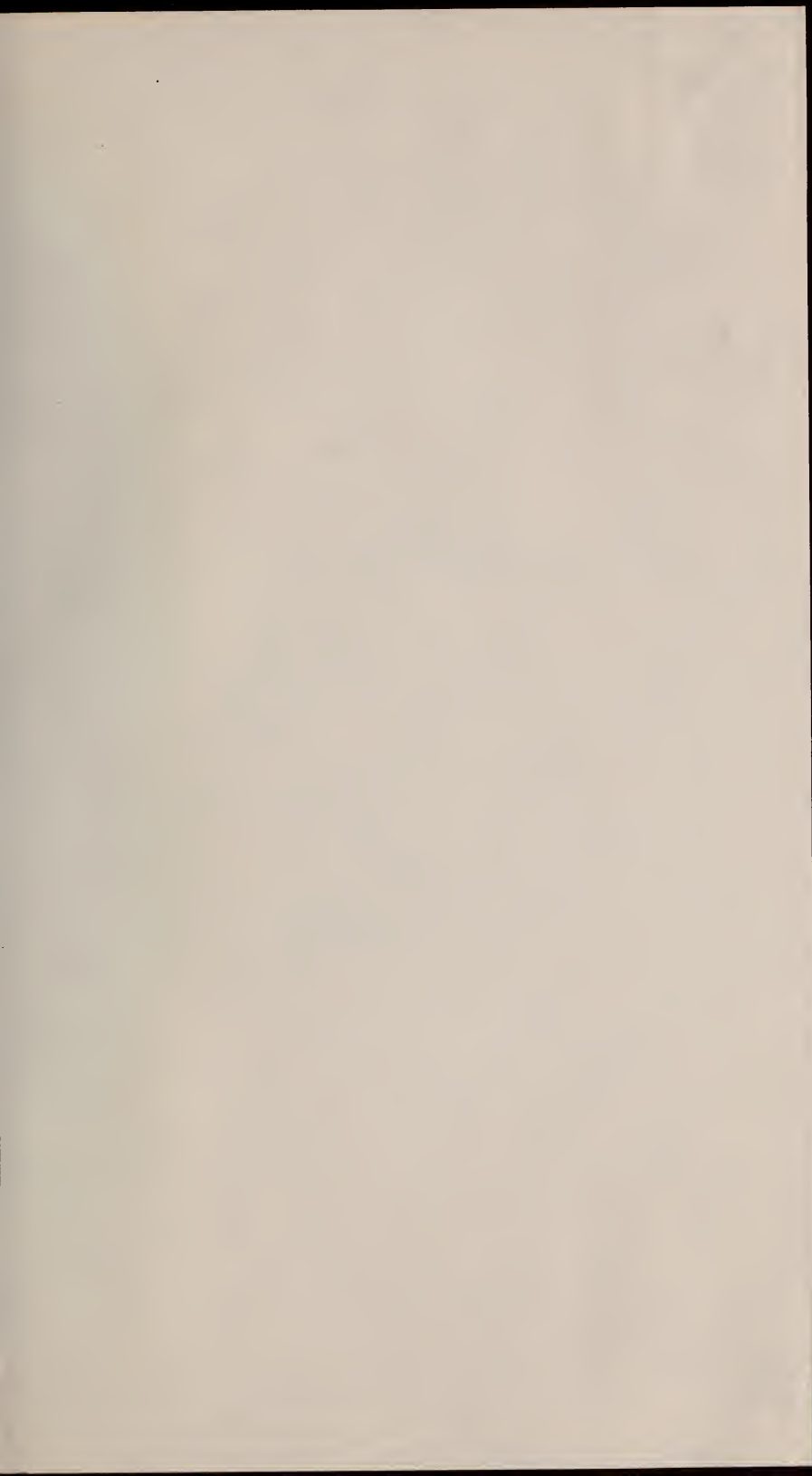
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